

CUTTING EDGE ECUMENICAL SERVICE IN VIENNA

June 14, 1997 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

An ecumenical service conducted at a Catholic cathedral in Austria in January illustrates the cutting edge of ecumenical unity. It brought together all of the various aspects of the end-times ecumenical movement: charismatic rock music, blending of denominations, dancing, sacramentalism, liturgy, non-doctrinal preaching, a non-doctrinal gospel. It had it all!

The service was held at Catholic City Cathedral of St. Stephen's in Vienna, Austria. A report in Charisma magazine gave this description:

"A bold step toward renewal in a maverick Catholic congregation in Vienna, Austria, could be evidence of a new move to spread reconciliation through Catholic Europe. ...

"On Jan. 18, for the first time ever, a Baptist pastor preached in St. Stephen's. Worship--electric guitars, saxophone, drums and all--was led by a musician from a Vineyard church. ...

"More than 2,000 mostly young Christians showed up in the cathedral ... The historic meeting's atmosphere was relaxed. Participants from all denominations were overtly happy--even thrilled, one organizer said. The service contained 'electrical' free church worship, contemplative Catholic hymns, personal testimonies, Scripture readings, an evangelical sermon, worship dance, a Catholic procession carrying the cross, a light ceremony and more. ...

"Bruce Clewett, national director of Youth With a Mission in Austria, said there were two remarkable things about this service: 'Firstly, that the archbishop didn't invite evangelical and independent charismatic church leaders just to come as guests, but rather to help run the program. Secondly, that the Protestants were so eager to come!'

"Clewett believes God is slowly opening the door to what he refers to as 'open-eyed unity.'

"The theme of the Vienna meeting was the Cross--where the unity is based 'not just on an experience or on the drawing power of some famous Christian personality,' Clewett said.

"Johannes Fichtenbauer, chief organizer of the meeting, is Christoph Schonborn's [Catholic Archbishop of Vienna] personal delegate to the charismatic and evangelical churches in Austria.

"Fichtenbauer emphasized the reconciliatory intention: 'Historically, Vienna has been a place of division and suffering, especially to Protestants during the Counter-Reformation. This cannot be mended except through reconciliation,' he said" ("Protestants Worship with Catholics in Vienna Cathedral," Charisma, May 1997, pp. 38,39).

It is the Baptists and the Protestants who have changed. The Roman Catholic Church still stands on its Council of Trent, which hurled curses at Bible believers and unleashed the Counter-Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church has not changed its basic doctrines. It still believes salvation is through the sacraments, regeneration is through baptism, Catholic tradition is equal in authority with the Bible, the pope is the supreme head of "the church," Mary is the Queen of Heaven and co-redemptress with Christ, the mass is a resacrifice of Christ, etc. We have documented this many times. Our book "Is the Roman Catholic Church Changing" contains excerpts from Vatican II and the New Catholic Catechism which affirm the declarations of Trent. Unity around "the Cross" is meaningless if the doctrine of the Cross is perverted.

Friends, the only folk absent from this ecumenical stew were old-fashioned (almost 2,000 years old!), Bible-believing, born again Christians, those who earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, those who prove all things and mark and avoid false doctrine. They are obeying the Word of God and are on the outside looking in at the ecumenical movement.

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).